March 31, 1993

D.J. Mulvaney,

RE: Brewster Kahle's paper for the Australian Academy of the
Humanities conference

It has come to my attention that you would like to hand out a
summary of chief issues of Brewster Kahle's paper. Brewster suggests
the abstract of the paper, which follows.

Please let me know if you require any other information, or if you
would like this summary in electronic form (you could also get it
from the floppy of the whole paper).

Thanks, Barbara

Wide Area Information Servers:
An Executive Information System for Unstructured Files

Brewster Kahle, Harry Morris, Franklin Davis,

Thomas Erickson, Clare Hart, Robin Palmer

In this paper we present a corporate information system for untrained users to search gigabytes of unformatted data using quasi-natural language and relevance feedback queries. The data can reside on distributed servers anywhere on a wide area network giving the users access to personal, corporate, and published information from a single interface. Effective queries can be turned into profiles, allowing the system to automatically alert the user when new data is available.

The system was tested by twenty executive users located in 6 cities. Our primary goal in building the system was to determine if the technology and infrastructure existed to make end-user searching of unstructured information profitable. We found that effective search and user interface technologies for end-users are available, but network technologies are still a limiting cost factor.

As a result of the experiment we are continuing the development of the system. This paper will describe the overall system architecture, the implemented subset, and the lessons learned.